



green sunfish

Lepomis cyanellus

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Perciformes
Family:	Centrarchidae

Features

The green sunfish grows to a maximum length of seven inches. It has a heavy body and a large mouth, with the upper jaw reaching to about the middle of the eye. The body is blue-green on the sides and back with a yellow or white belly. The sides of the head are spotted with emerald and yellow streaks. The flap on the gill cover is edged with white or yellow. It typically has whitish or yellow-orange leading edges on its dorsal, anal, and tail fins. The breeding male has white or pink pelvic fins and his dorsal, anal, and tail fins are edged with white or pink. The breeding female has a series of dark bars on the body.

Natural History

The green sunfish lives in streams, ditches, lakes, ponds, and other water bodies. It often is found in habitats where other sunfish cannot live, such as those with varying levels of turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and stream flow. It eats insects, fish, and crayfish. Spawning occurs in June. The

male constructs a nest by fanning his fins over the bottom substrate. The nest is not placed in a colony, like those of some other sunfish, unless suitable nest sites are limited. After the female deposits the eggs and they are fertilized the male remains with the nest until the young leave it in six or seven days.

Habitats

Missouri River; Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.